

# READING FRENCH-CANADIAN BAPTISM RECORDS

Canada “How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

July 2016

## GOAL

This guide will teach you how to extract genealogical information from a French-Canadian baptism (christening) record by identifying key words and phrases.

## INTRODUCTION

Information on baptisms (christenings) of children was recorded in church parish registers, usually at or near the time of birth. The majority of the paragraphs from French-Canadian baptism records follow a particular format, though they may vary by religion or location.

Many French-Canadian records are available online at FamilySearch. The following links will take you to these collections:

**Quebec Births and Baptisms, 1662-1898** (index only)

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1810411>

**Quebec, Catholic Parish Registers, 1621-1979** (some indexes and images)

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1321742>

You may want to consult the following “How to” Guides before continuing:

- [Inserting Special Characters](#)

## HOW TO

Before you begin extracting genealogical information from parish registers, it is important to understand some naming concepts and know where to find French vocabulary. Most registers are written in French; however, some early ones are in Latin, and some parishes have English mixed in with French entries.

### ***Dit* names**

For French-speaking Canadians, *dit* names (pronounced “dee”) are often part of the surname. For example, Jean Duprés *dit* cultivateur, means Jean Duprés, the farmer. The word *dit* (feminine: *dite*) means “also known as,” from the verb *dire* (to say).

- A *dit* name is an alias added to a family name, and is also called a nickname
- A *dit* name can distinguish one branch of a family from another, if living in the same town

- *Dit* names can be derived from occupation, town of origin, or physical features
- The same person may use more than one surname combination. For example: Gauthier, Gauthier *dit* Saint-Germaine, Gauthier-Saint-Germain, or Saint-Germain are all surnames for the same person. Sometimes the *dit* name can switch due to changes in a person's life.
- For a *dit* name directory, see <http://www.afgs.org/ditnames/index1.html>

## Vocabulary Words: French Numbers, Months, and Phrases

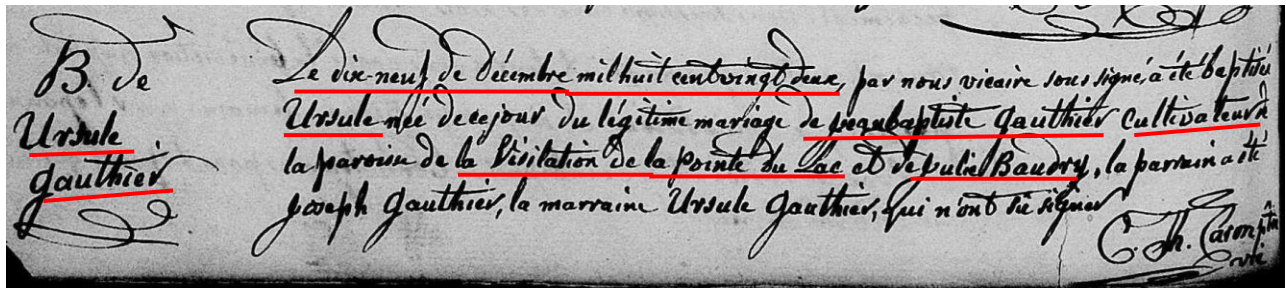
A French word list can be found at: [https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/French\\_Word\\_List](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/French_Word_List). Review French numbers, months, key phrases and the format of French-Canadian baptism records by studying this site: <http://maplestarsandstripes.com/shownotes/mss-013-dissecting-a-french-canadian-baptism-record/>.

These words are found in the baptism records that follow. Keep in mind that phrases and even words may be split between two lines. Refer back to these charts to find the meaning of key French words as you read the baptism records.

French	English
dix-neuf	19
décembre	December
mille, mil	1000
huit cent	800
vingt deux	22
trois	3rd
mars	March
six	6
nous vicaire	we the vicar
prêtre curé	priest rector
sous signé	undersigned
baptisé	baptise
née	born (a female)
né	born (a male)

French	English
de ce jour	on this day
du légitime mariage	of legal marriage
cultivateur	farmer
forgeron	blacksmith
la paroisse	the parish
de cette ville	of this town
parrain	godfather
marraine	godmother
ses père et mère	his/her parents
qui n'ont su signé	who were unable to sign (their names)
de ce requis	as is required
fille	daughter
fils	son

**Sample Baptism Record.** The following is an example of a French Canadian baptism record. Following the image, the entry is written out in French, and then English. Read the questions and **answers** below the translation.



Source: <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JDR2-QLR>

## French transcription of Baptism Record, line by line

B de Ursule Gauthier

Le dix-neuf de Décembre mil huit cent vingt deux, par nous vicaire sous signé a été baptisée Ursule, neé de ce jour du légitime mariage de Jeanbaptiste Gauthier, cultivateur de de la paroisse de la Visitation du la Pointe du Lac et de Julie Baudry. La parrain a été Joseph Gauthier, la marraine Ursule Gauthier, qui n'ont sù signer.

C. Th. Caron, ptre vic

## English translation of Baptism Record, line by line

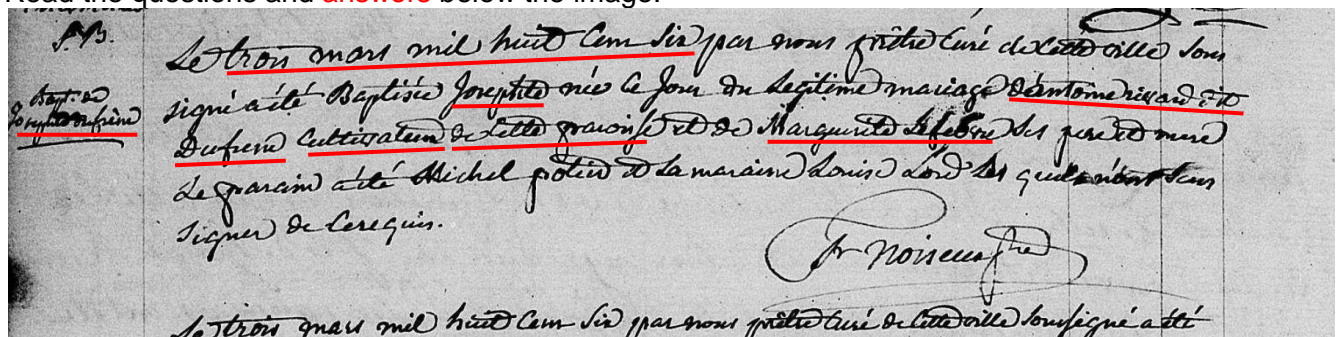
B [Baptism] of Ursule Gauthier

The 19th of December 1822, by we the undersigned vicar, was baptized Ursule, born this day of the legitimate marriage of Jeanbaptiste Gauthier, farmer of the parish of the Visitation of the Point of the Lake, & of Julie Baudry. The godfather was Joseph Gauthier, the godmother Ursule Gauthier, who did not know how to sign.

C. Th. Caron, ptre vic (priest vicar)

1. **Who was baptized?** Look in the image margin under the “B” and in line 2 after the word “baptisée” – **Ursule Gauthier**
2. **What was the date of baptism?** Look in line 1 of the image – **Le dix-neuf de Décembre mil huit cent vingt deux**, (The 19th of December, 1822)
3. **Who was the father and what was his occupation?** Look in line 2 of the image – **Jeanbaptiste Gauthier, cultivateur** (Jeanbaptiste Gauthier, farmer)
4. **What was the father’s residence?** Look in line 3 of the image – **la Visitation de la Pointe du Lac**
5. **Who was the mother?** Look in line 3 of the image – **Julie Baudry**

**Baptism Record.** Now, try to identify the key words and phrases without a full translation. Read the questions and **answers** below the image.



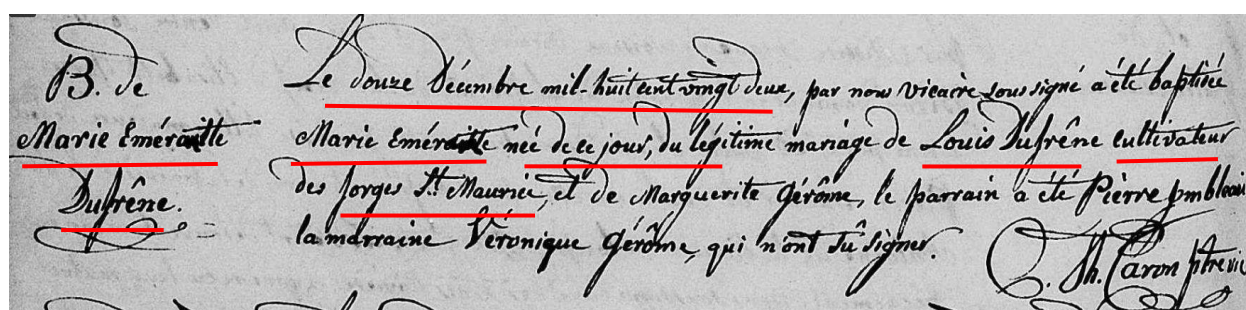
Source : <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JDRN-892>

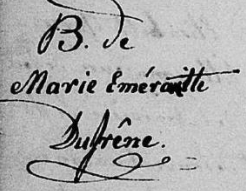
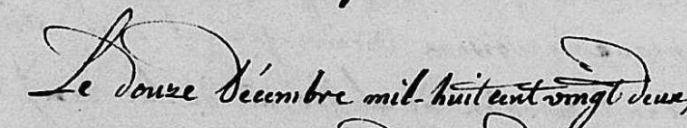
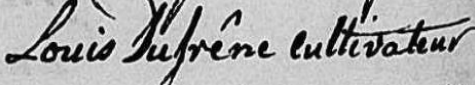
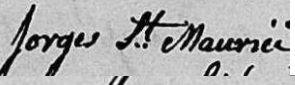
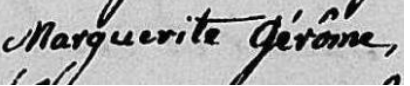
1. **Who was baptized?** Look in the margin and in line 2 after the word “Baptisé” – **Josephthe Dufrêne**
2. **What was the date of baptism?** Look in line 1 – **trois mars mil huit cent six** (3 March 1806)

3. **Who was the father?** Look in lines 2 and 3 – **Antoine Rivard dit Dufrêne**
4. **What was the father's occupation?** Look in line 3 – **cultivateur** (farmer)
5. **What was the father's residence?** Look in line 3 of the image – **de cette paroisse** (of this parish). Note: The parish name is not in the paragraph, but is found at the beginning of the book, and in the indexed record: Immaculée Conception, Trois-Rivières, Québec, Canada. To find it, click on the source link below the image.
6. **Who was the mother?** Look in line 3 – **Marguerite Lefèbvre**

## PRACTICE

Look at the baptism record below. Read the questions and look for the **answers** in the image.



Who was baptized?	(Margin and line 2) Marie Éméranthe Dufrêne.		
What was the date of the baptism?	(Line 1) Le 12 Décembre 1822		
Who was the father and what was his occupation?	(Line 2) Louis Dufrêne, cultivateur		
Father's residence?	(Line 3) Forges St. Maurice		
Who was the mother?	(Line 3) Marguerite Jérôme		

Source: <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JDR2-QLG>

## ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this "How to" Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you've mastered the guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.